Government responsibility for mental health of soldiers

http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2012/feb/24/veterans-suicide-rate-reflects-echoes-war/

This article shows that the suicide rate of veterans in the U.S. is much higher than the overall rate of suicide in the U.S. This creates the byproduct of the government having a military to be these increased suicide rates and increased rates of mental illness in veterans. Therefore, the government does hold some responsibility in caring for the veterans who are struggling with post war trauma. It also mentions PTSD, and how there is no cure for altered chemistry, but the symptoms can be treated with medical and counseling. This causes me to pose the question, where does the governments responsibility to care for the mental health of veterans end? If PTSD is un-curable, and the government can't afford to pay for everything because of limited funds, how much can they really help mentally ill veterans, and when can they not help them anymore? -Sam

http://www.npr.org/2012/09/27/161853675/army-seeks-to-curb-rising-tide-of-suicides

My Article answers both sides to the question and gives responsibility to not just the Government or an organization but to the individuals who are with these men. I found this very interesting as it takes a lot of politics out of the issue and doesn’t make it about who has to pick up this task but more about the soldiers need our help and as a country we all need to put effort in this. The government offers suicide prevention secessions but many soldiers are not going. They also are creating other programs such as “Army Starrs” and an app which is suppose to remind soldiers about their love ones back home. All of these have the same goal. The real question is just one of them on there own enough to stop the problem? Should it only be the militaries responsibility to help these soldiers? No it shouldn’t as this problem is only growing and to rely on one organization to fix the problem would be naïve. We need to pull all our resources together and end suicides in the military as a nation.

-Nick

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/26/for-veterans-a-surge-of-new-treatments-for-trauma/#more-134472>

The first article discusses different types of treatment for veterans with PTSD. It talks about the first treatment; individual psychotherapy that forces the veteran to think about their traumatic experiences in a new way and the second treatment; group therapy that rather focuses on the present. The second type of treatment was used at a Veterans Affairs clinic in New Orleans, where 10 veterans took a 10-week course designed by the Washington-based Center for Mind-Body Medicine. It was extremely successful, with a very low dropout rate. The utilization of this non-profit organization (Center for Mind-Body Medicine) in a facility run by the government brings up the question: assuming that eligible veterans should automatically receive PTSD treatment, should the government be giving up their services to non-government organizations to provide more jobs and stimulate the economy?

<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2381>

This talks about the government efforts to raise awareness for veteran suicide. It specifically says that the Veteran Affairs is increasing its workforce by 50%. If these services were to be provided by other non-government organizations, would the increase in workforce be greater than this increase? -Holly

<http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2012/jun/24/va-looks-at-ways-to-reduce-suicide-rate/>

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/27/veterans-form-pro-legal-m_n_1919809.html?ncid=edlinkusaolp00000003>

Both of these articles offer possible solutions to lessen the ‘unheard-of’ rising suicide toll among veterans. One option offers to lessen the gap between physicians and soldiers. The other offers a far more ideological idea with legalizing marijuana for soldiers. However, the federal government has yet to accept any official attempt to lower the suicide rates. Have any type of federal or state government even recognized this rising problem? Is there something 'in the works' that can address this? I do think that soldiers who are deemed in 'critical mental condition' should be subjected to a program that works with them, and hopefully lowers the amount of PTSD among soldiers/veterans.

-Cameron

http://www.npr.org/2012/02/07/146531532/as-iraq-veterans-return-how-do-we-welcome-them

I think this article, although perhaps indirectly, provides interesting insight to our seminar. It is fairly clear that the worst veteran mental health has come from the War in Vietnam and now the War in Iraq. These two are both American histories most polarizing wars. What is the effect of war controversy on veteran mental health? To me at least, it is gravely important that while support of wars may freely wane the support of soldiers must not. Perhaps the mental health of veterans is just as much the responsibility of the civilian population as it is the government.

-Matt

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5334479/ns/health-mental_health/t/returning-soldiers-suffers-ptsd/>

-This article brings up an interesting point...not only does it list a few interesting facts about PTSD it also goes on to say how many of the soldiers who know they suffer mental instability due to war, dont seek help. I was wondering why? Is it because they dont want to appear weak or because they dont want to loose their loved ones or their job? -Olivia

<http://newoldage.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/11/10/families-struggle-to-care-for-veterans/>

This article tells the story of a woman and her husband who is a Vietnam veteran. It brings up the issue of the government's responsiblity to their veterans.

A similar study concludes "Of the 462 caregivers of veterans responding to an online questionnaire, 30 percent said they’d filled that role for a decade or more, and 68 percent called their situation “highly stressful.” This was interesting to me because it brings up the question of whether veterans in general need more care? Because this man has PTSD, rage and depression from the Vietnam war it makes caregiving that much more difficult.

<https://www.unitedhealthfoundation.org/Grants/GrantsCaregiversOfVeterans.aspx>

This is the study that shows that veterans need more caregiving.

-SC

[http:/](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/09/us/suicides-eclipse-war-deaths-for-us-troops.html?_r=0)

<http://nation.time.com/2012/09/04/hey-mr-president-heres-how-to-really-help-hurting-vets/>

This article touches on how President Obama wants to expand healthcare for the veterans who are in need of mental health. He wants to make it a national effort, rather than just the VA (a department that helps veterans in need) and believes that we must educate police officers, correctional officials and others in working with veterans to cure them from mental illness. I am curious to see what the government will do in the near future to help out ill veterans of war. -Owen

[/www.nytimes.com/2012/06/09/us/suicides-eclipse-war-deaths-for-us-troops.html?\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/09/us/suicides-eclipse-war-deaths-for-us-troops.html?_r=0)

The article sums up the state of active duty and combat veteran suicide rates. It aslo brings up a few interesting points: 1. There are not nearly enough qualified mental health proffessionals for troops, veterans or active duty, to seek help from. 2. Those that do seek help are often ostracsized and made fun of for seeking this help. And 3. The combination of the financial stress' at home and terror of the war are compounding this issue more than ever. Could the increased suicide rates be due to our currrent recession and there is nothing our government can do?- Dan Wood

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/15/opinion/sunday/kristof-a-veterans-death-the-nations-shame.html?pagewanted=all&_moc.semityn.www>

the article talks about a mothers struggle about her two sons that died of suicide. to me this raises the question should the government be held responsible for the deaths of their own people? Is the government taking any responsibility for these deaths? or is it the individual's responsibility for their own deaths? but i feel that it couldnt be because these people werent expecting to have such deep mental struggle. they knew that they might die but isnt this mental burden worse than dying? i know that war is much worse of the battlefield than on it because more people kill themselves at home coming home from war. is war worth the price? abbas J

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/09/10/tough-homecoming-for-vets-a-marine-homeless-after-five-tours-in-iraq.html>

Veteran’s unemployment rate is more than 50 percent higher than for civilians of the same age. Many of these young men and women are simply not ready to go directly into the civilian workforce. They require help: emotional counseling, assistance with substance and alcohol abuse, and supportive, paid transitional work to develop the skills and attitudes that employers require. We have failed to effectively help these soldiers in previous years, but many ask the question of why these problems are occurring now. Why is the problem worse than it was for the Vietnam War? Our military is now made up exclusively of those who volunteer to join, and unlike in past wars, the young people who served in Iraq and Afghanistan have often served multiple tours of duty. With no draft, our troops have less education on average and come from less economically diverse backgrounds. Due to the high unemployment rate and limited financial aid for prospective college students, many young men and women joined the military in order to receive the benefits that the GI Bill now provides to further their education. We still have a chance to do better, to provide the assistance that the veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq need to thrive in civilian life. But we can do this only if we are completely honest about who they are and what they need. - Christian

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/28/opinion/the-vas-shameful-betrayal.html>

This is article discusses how the veterans department is Increasing their mental health staffing, and how they try to evaluate the mental health of all veterans not in crisis within 14 days. My thinking behind this article is that as a new class of veterans return from battle, what do we have to do with the older class of veterans? A main issue they touch on is finding enough mental health professionals in rural areas, and most veterans who suffer from PTSD are not able to transport themselves to therapy, because of their mental condition. This brings up the question how are you supposed to get help when you can’t find it?-Daly H

<http://iava.org/files/IAVA_invisible_wounds_0.pdf>

This article reflects the effects of PTSD and Depression and the aftermath these soldiers experience. The government has always pushed for helping veterans in getting jobs when they return home, and the issues of PTSD and Depression have always stopped veterans from getting jobs when they come home. If the government has always pushed to help veterans get jobs, and if PTSD and Depression is affecting these veterans ability to get jobs, the government does have a responsibility to care for the mental health of veterans. -West

<http://www.fedshirevets.gov/pdf/Vets_Initiative_Strategic_Plan.pdf>

This article put fourth by the US Government and President Obama outlines their initiative to help the veterans of the United States Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force get jobs as they exit their career of service, and push on with their careers. This outlines their commitment to hiring veterans into Federal employment allowing them to easily start their second career. The federal government also has another policy that you must be fit for work in order to be considered for employment. How can we really say that we are helping veterans get jobs, when 20% of returning veterans have severe cases of PTSD or Depression, in order for them to be fit to work, it is our responsibility to help these veterans undergo the right treatment to return to a healthy state fo mind. -West

<http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/11/08/homeless.veterans/>

Why should the government be held responsible for the mental health of veterans when they are not responsible for the mental health of other workers like men and women who work on Wall Street?

Men and women who come home from war often deal with PTSD, and other mental health issues that no one can understand unless they have fought in a war themselves. I believe that the government should offer clincs similar to alcoholics anonymous for veterans who return home from war, but the government should not bear the responsibility for deaths and crimes that result from these people returning back to a civilian lifestyle.

A group that meets weekly to help veterans cope with the stresses of civilian lifestyle and come up with ways to help them alliviate the terrible memories from war is what the government should have to provide for its people.

-lexie

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/28/opinion/the-vas-shameful-betrayal.html?_r=0>

This article is written by a former Marine who served in the initial wave of troops in Afghanistan in 2001 and in the height of the Iraq war in 2003. In the article he documents his and other veteran’s frustration with the Department of Veteran’s Affairs (VA), a largely ineffectual government organization meant to handle veterans after their deployments end. The main point of this article is that although the government does have an organization that is meant to care for veterans, it is extremely ineffectual and provides minimal help to veterans. It raises the question of whether or not the government should devote more resources to the care for veterans, because the current amount is clearly not sufficient. The veterans clearly deserve more mental health help than they currently receive, and the VA is not currently filling that need.

Topher

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/26/opinion/kristof-veterans-and-brain-disease.html?_r=0>

This article talks about the emergence of brain diseases in soldiers after they immediately return from Iraq and Afghanistan. The disease that they are suffering from is one that normally affects football players and boxers, long after their careers are over, usually several decades after their careers end, but veterans are contracting it much more rapidly due to their frequent exposure to explosions and IEDs. The veteran’s brains are literally being eaten away slowly due to their frequent brain trauma, and currently they are receiving no help from the government with their disease. The disease is currently incurable, but the government could be devoting more of its considerable resources to help cure it, but currently they are doing nothing. Even though this disease is a relatively new condition for veterans, it raises the question of how much the government should be focusing on the problems currently facing our returning veterans, instead of staying focused on the illnesses commonly associated with veterans.

Topher

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/military/story/2012-08-09/army-suicides/57096238/1>

This article specifically discusses the suicide rate of soldiers in and returning from the war in Iraq/Afghanistan. Attention is brought to the fact that the fatality rate has increased in recent years, more so than during any other war or conflict. Shockingly..."suicides are now the most common form of death in the Army, claiming more lives than combat or motor vehicle accidents" involving military personnel. The number of deaths per 100,000 soldiers monthly has increased from 23 last year to 29 in just the first 7 months of 2012. Why can't the military channel money into psychological programs to aid soldiers and veterans with stress problems from war-time. Could government sponsored psychological evaluations and clinics help determine the motives for suicide and target solutions to stop them? I feel the government should step up to help its nations finest.

-Will Cornacchia

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/13/us/13vets.html>

This article discusses how the government is currently making an effort to help veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder receive disability benefits more easily. Despite being a big step forward for veterans, supporters of this movement are questioning whether or not this is enough to effectively help veteran’s overcome their mental health problems. This is because the government has limited the veteran’s to only being able to receive care from the Department of Veteran Affairs. Veterans feel that because their care is restricted to the Department of Veteran Affairs, they will not receive the same quality of care that they would in a private clinic, where most veterans have been receiving care all along. The question I would like to ask after reading this article is whether or not the government is giving these veterans the bare minimum amount of care possible. Even though the government is trying to make an effort towards helping veterans, it appears that these efforts may not be the most that the government can do. I would argue that veterans should be given the maximum amount of treatment possible, considering the sacrifices that every veteran has made to our country.

-Kevin Seiler

http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/local/region/government-military-broaden-offensive-against-ptsd-272105/

This article discusses the government's solution to the growing issue of suicide rate in the military. It also says that research has shown that PTSD is directly related to the "frequency and intensity of exposure to combat", after reading Will's article therefore I wonder, is this why suicide rates have become greater in higher ranked military men? President Obama proposed a budget raise and has taken action in order to make it easier for veterans to access help. Veterans will no longer have to provide evidence of an event that may have caused their PTSD. Also, military services have created a program to try and build up soldiers' emotional strength before deployment. I wonder how effective this will actually be. Another issue the government and military service are working to get beyond is the fear veterans feel of admitting to having PTSD. Veterans fear the disorder could harm their careers. Is it possible that because the current war the U.S. is in is unpopular adds to the PTSD of soldiers? Also, if the war is already unpopular amongst the people of the U.S., is it worth staying in the war if it is causing all this stress of the soldiers?

-Brittany